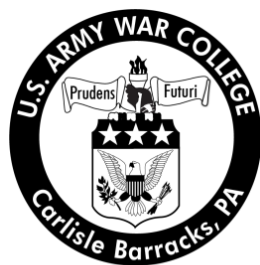


A Matter of Perspective

by

Lieutenant Colonel Kara Soules
United States Army



United States Army War College
Class of 2012

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USAWC CIVILIAN RESEARCH PROJECT

A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE

by

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While there will always be a critical need for tactical and technical competency, the focus on how human factors impact military leadership and outcomes continues to grow; understanding and anticipating human behavior will always matter most in a time of high risk, high pay-off persistent engagement. The need for a deeper understanding and appreciation of others' perspectives and cultures is relevant in a wide range of missions, and especially so in a joint, interagency, intergovernmental, multi-national context. For the military, the goal of gaining perspective is not necessarily to instill altruistic behavior, acquiesce to another's outlook, or encourage leaders to take pity, but to collaborate (or in certain cases compete) with others by suspending one's own beliefs and biases to gain an accurate understanding as to others' motives, ultimately to secure U.S. objectives. Not only is perspective-taking a critical component in achieving cultural awareness and understanding, but it also is necessary for development of interpersonal skills that enable effective communication, relationship-building, negotiation and conflict resolution.

A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE

Being such a fundamental human process, there is almost no aspect of organizational functioning that is not potentially improved by better perspective taking.

—Sharon Parker¹

While there will always be a critical need for tactical and technical competency, the focus on how human factors impact military leadership and outcomes continues to grow; understanding and anticipating human behavior will always matter most in a time of high risk, high-payoff persistent engagement. To ensure competency in necessary skills, such as negotiation and conflict management, taking perspective – being aware of and putting aside ones' own beliefs and biases, and actively and accurately understanding others' views, agendas and motives – should be an instrumental part of the Army's collective capability to operate effectively in a complex joint, interagency, intergovernmental, multi-national (JIIM) environment.

The need for a deeper understanding and appreciation of others' perspectives and culture applies to many environments and includes a wide range of missions from conflict prevention to humanitarian assistance to support to civil authorities. For the military, the goal of gaining perspective is not necessarily to instill altruistic behavior, acquiesce to another's outlook, or to encourage leaders to take pity, but to collaborate (or in certain cases compete) with others by suspending one's own beliefs and biases to gain an understanding as to others' motives toward achieving an enduring solution.² Not only is perspective-taking a critical component in achieving cultural awareness and understanding³, but it also is directly related to the development of necessary

interpersonal skills that enable effective communication, relationship-building, cooperation, negotiation and conflict resolution. Army leaders will be required to hone interpersonal skills and have a better understanding⁴ of others' beliefs, motives, and needs - as well as their own, to operate effectively, especially in a JIIM environment.

In November 2011, U.S. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta described the need for an agile, flexible, innovative U.S. force - given the fiscal realities of limited resources - that must be complemented by "...strong alliances, partnerships, [and] regional efforts at cooperation as part of the answer."⁵ At the 2011 Association of the U.S. Army annual symposium, the U.S. Army Chief of Staff (CSA), General Raymond Odierno, highlighted that the U.S. Army must remain a force of decisive action, involving a wide range of missions, which include "regular and irregular warfare against conventional and hybrid threats; providing humanitarian assistance, both home and abroad; engaging with our allies while building partner capacity; and supporting civil authorities."⁶ Further, the need for perspective-taking underlies many aspects in the 38th CSAs "Marching Orders", spanning from the specified priorities to leader expectations to the three principal and interconnected roles of the Army, which are Prevent, Shape and Win.⁷

To prevent, understanding the enemy and what will deter him from resorting to armed conflict is key. To shape, we need to enable our friends and contain our enemies,

"...by engaging our partners, fostering mutual understanding through military-to-military contacts, and helping partners build the capacity to defend themselves. This is an investment in the future, an investment we

cannot afford to forego. It is cultivating friends before you need them, being a reliable, consistent and respectful partner.”⁸

To win also requires gaining an understanding of the perspectives of all involved, not just of the adversary. In a recent speech by Stanley McChrystal, the former commander underscores that a joint, interagency, intergovernmental effort has to adapting from traditional decision-making, information ownership, organizational equities, and command and control toward ensuring shared consciousness and purpose, inclusion, transparency, teamwork and leadership to be effective.⁹

In these recent speeches and publications by current and former Army and Department of Defense (DoD) senior leaders, a consistent trend of cooperation, collaboration and relationship-building requirements is prevalent along with the mandate to ensure well-trained, educated and experienced leaders and an agile, adaptive force capable of decisive action. Ultimately, the call for cooperation and collaboration as well as for a greater appreciation and understanding of others’ perspectives and culture applies to many environments and across a range of missions from prevention to humanitarian assistance to support to civil authorities. Not only is perspective-taking a critical component in achieving cultural awareness and understanding¹⁰, but it also is directly related to adaptive interpersonal skills to include communication, building relationships, cooperation, negotiation and conflict resolution. Research has shown that perspective-taking can positively impact¹¹, and also be affected by, these skills and desired outcomes, which are all required for operating successfully – at the tactical, organizational and strategic level - in an era of complexity and uncertainty.

This paper will explore the benefits, challenges, implications and outcomes of perspective-taking; will outline how perspective-taking correlates with other adaptive interpersonal skills; and will discuss as to what extent perspective-taking can, or should, be trained or enhanced to improve adaptive interpersonal skills for Army leaders in the 21st century.

PERSPECTIVE TAKING DEFINED

Research has shown perspective taking to be a fundamental component of effective communications and is known to be essential in social functioning and cognitive development.¹² Learning to take another's perspective is required for advanced levels of thought and reasoning¹³ and well-developed perspective-taking abilities also help to inhibit egocentrism and thus enable improved interpersonal relations.¹⁴

Social, cognitive and developmental psychology research depicts a positive correlation between perspective taking and conflict resolution, adaptive (transformational) leadership, team-building, and cultural understanding.¹⁵ However, while there is proof that perspective-taking ability develops with age and influences functional social interaction, the active teaching of improving or enhancing this skill is not a standard part of the curriculum in our educational system at any level. The U.S. military has recognized that perspective-taking is a critical ability in advise and assist roles, and continues to conduct research to further identify and understand what makes some humans better perspective-takers as well as how to train people to accurately take others perspectives. As a result, some units within the U.S. Marines and Army are currently implementing

multi-cultural perspective-taking methodologies and assessing the effectiveness of the training; the process of which is in the fledgling stage for both services. (The extent this ability impacts decisiveness should also be considered while assessing the effectiveness of this training. As highlighted earlier, in certain situations and missions, taking perspective may be unnecessary and detrimental.)

Perspective taking involves more than the ability or appreciation to acknowledge that another can hold a different view than oneself, but “...unfortunately, for many people, it stops at precisely that point.”¹⁶ Because humans have the capability to take another’s perspective does not necessitate that perspective taking will occur, or will be accurate. While earlier studies focused mainly on the measure of perspective-taking ability, more recent studies within the decade have included the importance of measuring not only the ability to take another’s perspective, but also the willingness and effectiveness in doing so.

Arguing that much of the previous research failed to differentiate perspective-taking effort from effectiveness, a 2008 report focused on organizational dynamics defined perspective taking as an intentional process “when an observer tries to understand, in a non-judgmental way, the thoughts, motives, and/or feelings of a target, as well as why they think and/or feel the way they do.”¹⁷ These authors elaborated that perspective-taking *effectiveness* is, “the degree to which the observer has a relatively accurate, comprehensive, and objective understanding and appreciation of the target’s thoughts and/or feelings

and the reasons they are thinking and/or feeling that way” to include the appreciation of the other’s perspective as legitimate.¹⁸

In a comprehensive description, Harvard professor Hunter Gelbach categorizes social¹⁹ perspective taking as a complex aptitude and suggests that an appropriate definition needs to encompass and address the cognitive ability to take another’s perspective, the propensity to do so, the impact of the environment or situation, what the outcomes (i.e. accuracy, inaccuracy or conclusion to reengage or disengage) might be and how they impact other abilities.²⁰

The goal of perspective-taking - in a military context - is not necessarily to inspire altruistic behavior, acquiesce to others’ views, or encourage leaders to sympathize, but to cooperate²¹ with others by suspending one’s own beliefs and biases to gain an accurate understanding as to others’ motives and desires toward achieving enduring solutions. In Army manuals, “empathy” is listed as a necessary leadership attribute, and simply, is defined as the “ability to understand and share the feelings of another.”²² While there is not a clear academic consensus on the relationship between empathy and perspective taking, much research on the subject categorizes perspective taking as the cognitive component of empathy.²³ (The second empathy component being the emotional response - affective empathy, which is further defined as parallel and reactive empathy.)²⁴

The need for perspective taking spans the Be-Know-Do and Lead-Develop-Achieve models outlined in Field Manual 22-100, Army Leadership and

Army Regulation 600-100 Personnel – General Army Leadership, respectively. Perspective taking requires an understanding of ones' own beliefs/emotions (Be/self-awareness); a cognitive ability to suspend or put aside one's own belief or understanding and take and appreciate the perspective of another, or multiple perspectives, in a non-judgmental, non-egocentric manner (Know); and a motivation or propensity to engage in attempting to understand another's view (Do).

Regarding the Lead, Develop, Achieve framework, the ability to put aside biases and look at issues or challenges from different views are necessary for all eight identified core leader competencies. Per the General Army Leadership manual, leaders should master the following: 1) lead others, 2) extend influence beyond the chain of command, 3) lead by example, 4) communicate, 5) create a positive organizational climate, 6) prepare self, 7) develop others, and 8) achieve results.²⁵ Leaders need to remain cognizant of any impact to their decisiveness as gaining other perspectives could tend to obscure or impede necessary actions.

The Army's list of identified needed leader core competencies (in the cognitive affective and behavioral domain) is clearly long, and given time and fiscal constraints to meet these demands, how can all leaders learn to optimally be self-aware, clear communicators, cooperative, collaborative, team-builders and managers of conflict given a range of personalities, training, education, missions and experience? Arguably, being able to accurately anticipate and

understand multiple perspectives may underlie, and inform, a large majority of the Army's required adaptive interpersonal skills.

ABILITY, PROPENSITY, ACCURACY & SITUATION

Ability. Self-awareness is critical in one's attempt to accurately and effectively understand another's perspective as there is a need to distinguish the self from others and suspend one's own biases and beliefs while imagining or inferring another's. With cognitive development, the skills and capacity to take a perspective other than one's own was found to evolve with age.²⁶ "In social psychology, many researchers claim that the social construction of meaning derives from one's own implicit theories about what the other knows, feels, thinks and believes"; as such, "errors in assessing another's perspective are rooted in a failure to suppress one's self."²⁷

The difficulty of this particular challenge to overcome an egocentric view can be influenced by one's society or culture. One shared finding among many investigations in the U.S. is that Americans, even when prompted or manipulated, are not often adept in taking another's perspective.

Perspective taking, per a study conducted at the University of Chicago, can differ depending on whether a person is influenced by either an individualistic or collectivistic environment. Although perspective-taking ability develops equally with normal childhood cognitive development across the human race, this particular investigation found that Chinese college students were more capable of unreflectively, as well as accurately, interpreting the perceptual view of another than their American counterparts.²⁸ The researchers hypothesized that the two

cultures would have a fundamentally different social focus; in general, that the Westerners would tend to take an independent perspective, and the East Asians, an interdependent focus, and thus behave less egocentrically.²⁹

The American and Chinese students were selected based on similarities in age, field of study and assessed intelligence. Despite the intended simplicity of the task involved in the research, Americans failed 65% of the time to consider the perspective of another, whereas the Chinese students had less than a 1% failure rate. The evaluation, conducted in the students' respective native language, showed that possessing the ability to take another's perspective does not necessarily result in the same level of use. Overwhelmingly, the Chinese students focused their attention on the other, while the Americans were egocentric in their view during the testing. The researchers concluded that, in this specific situation, the Chinese "are better at solving perspective-taking problems, make fewer errors in assessing the intentions of another person, and are less distracted by their own perspective."³⁰

An individualistic society values independence, but resulting egocentrism may pose some challenges to our military leaders and soldiers in their efforts to resolve conflict, build relationships, and clearly communicate; especially depending on ones' military occupational specialty and mission requirements. It is imperative that leaders conducting security cooperation and relationship building-based missions including Security Force Assistance understand the needs and motives of those with whom they are required to interact.

Trying to shape or build others to match our own standards and desires, mismanaging expectations, or misinterpreting needs – regardless of the best intentions at any level – can often be more damaging than no interaction at all. As such, the ability to be aware of one's beliefs and biases as well as understand others' perspectives is imperative to ensure successful planning, exchanges of ideas, coordination and implementation.

Propensity. In the contemporary and future operating environment when conducting Irregular Warfare activities (foreign internal defense, unconventional warfare, counterterrorism, counterinsurgency and stability operations³¹), according to David Maxwell, “we should try to understand a population – and the situational context – but we should not try to change a population's values or create another nation in our own image; we should deal with others as they are and not as we would wish them to be.”³² Certainly, there are times and places when and where perspective taking should not or may not be desired in military operations.³³ However, in most leadership roles and in careers such as Information Operations, Military Intelligence, Civil Affairs, Public Affairs, and Military Information Support Operations, taking into consideration the situation, realizing ones' own values and putting them aside, inferring and understanding others, and then acting decisively and communicating effectively with various audiences, both internal and external to the military, is a continuous requirement.

Regardless, having the ability to take another's perspective does not guarantee the willingness or motivation to do so.³⁴ Parker et al. list two aspects that drive one to understand where another is coming from, and thus result in a

willingness to try harder, engage in a wider range of cognitive, emotional and behavioral strategies, and persist longer to learn the other's perspective.³⁵ These two main motivating factors include an acknowledgment that a better understanding of the other will help benefit the situation or achieve one's goal, and that one doesn't already know the other's perspective. In a hierarchical organization such as the military, listening to subordinates or appearing indecisive may be interpreted as weakness; and, if a leader harbors prejudices or stereotypes, then she will further limit her openness to others' views.

The first aspect, appreciating the other's view (when relevant) toward improving the situation, may be easier to achieve than the latter. After a decade's worth of experience in a joint, interagency, intergovernmental, multi-national environment, Army leaders *should* appreciate the relevance of needing to understand others' position, views and motives toward anticipating issues and developing and implementing mutually acceptable solutions. However, as one's own experiences and knowledge are more readily accessible, a leader must first get over his egocentric biases to more accurately simulate or infer the thoughts or motives of another.³⁶ One may also have to push aside emotions to be motivated to try to take another's view. While anger and aggression will likely be barriers, self-esteem³⁷ and positive affect have been shown to directly correlate with one's ability and willingness to take perspective (and also reduce prejudice, which will be discussed in more detail in the Correlation and Outcomes section of this paper).

Not only is perspective taking a difficult aptitude requiring cognitive and emotional resources, but also it is also a dynamic process similar to, and certainly a component of design.³⁸ More broadly, perspective-taking is relevant to most of the Army operations process and inherent in its fundamentals as the latter process is commander-centric; requires situational understanding; is design pervasive (involving critical and creative thinking and collaboration and dialogue); requires commanders to continually consider and combine tasks focused on the population as well as the enemy; and requires continuous assessment to enable organizational learning and operational adaptability.³⁹ Acknowledging the relevance of perspective-taking, generating the motivation (whether explicit or implicit), and ultimately achieving accuracy toward desired outcomes is not a simple or one-time effort, especially in a complex situation; revisiting the matter, verifying inferences, and updating one's understanding of the people and issues involved is vital in the perspective-taking process.

Accuracy & Situation. Clearly stated, “abilities are of practical importance only when people try to use them, and there is no more immediate barrier to accurate perspective taking than failing to use it in the first place.”⁴⁰ But, despite the natural ability most humans possess to intuit the mind of another, an accurate inference does not necessarily result - even when motivation or willingness is present. Further, one's confidence in the ability usually outweighs the accuracy in doing so.⁴¹ In addition to failing to engage in the process at all or failing to put aside one's own view, additional barriers include insufficient adjustment of one's egocentric perspective⁴², assuming that

the other is similar to one's self and making false assumptions⁴³ (false consensus effect)⁴⁴, assuming one is too dissimilar and thus intentionally not taking the other's perspective, and situational factors; all but the latter relating to egocentric biases, and thus underscoring the importance of self-awareness for Army leaders.

While the impact of egocentric biases on accuracy has been the focus of much perspective-taking research, the impact of the situational or environmental factors has also been of interest. In correspondence bias, observers may blame negative behavior on the actor at the expense of considering external pressure, which may influence the person to act in a certain manner. This bias proposes that observers fall short of taking into consideration information about the power of the situation and over utilize inferences about the disposition of others; such a bias may not occur when an observer becomes the actor.⁴⁵

To add to the difficulty of perspective-taking accuracy, lack of access to the actor or target (due to personality, mood, deception⁴⁶, language barriers or physical proximity), lack of familiarity or novel cultures (organizational, ethnic or national), time constraints and other significant pressures such as physical threat or aggression all limit accuracy, and likely propensity. With so many situational and egocentric bias-related factors to consider, how does one navigate these challenges, what is the potential impact regarding some key adaptive interpersonal skills and to what extent can perspective-taking be further developed or enhanced?

CORRELATION AND OUTCOMES.

Based on the theoretical work of Jean Piaget and George Herbert Mead regarding perspective-taking capability enabling non-egocentric behavior, Mark Davis proposed that perspective taking should “allow an individual to anticipate the behavior and reactions of others, therefore facilitating smoother and more rewarding interpersonal relationships.”⁴⁷ Not only can the individual benefit from engaging in perspective taking, but the consequences could improve the quality of the interactions with others due to better communication, enhanced trust, stereotype reduction and lower interpersonal aggression; and, when aggregated over multiple individuals and time⁴⁸, the resulting positive relationships can also generate outcomes such as better cooperation and reduced conflict.

In a 2011 Rand study to identify and determine what knowledge, skills and abilities were most relevant to developing officers to be effective in JIIM domains, the findings outlined that interpersonal skills were of primary importance given that, in these settings, “success usually requires voluntary collaboration between independent organizations that are frequently pursuing different agendas” across different cultures.⁴⁹ Further, “such collaboration depends on far more than simply convincing stakeholders to go along with an obvious, U.S.-style solution” as officers “simply could not solve the problems with which they were confronted without the knowledge, skills and perspective that other stakeholders brought to the table.”⁵⁰ Regardless of good intentions toward achieving goals or missions, and irrespective of a competitive or cooperative situation, in almost any

environment where there are people and organizations, limited resources and various agendas, there will be conflict.

Conflict Resolution. Prejudice, bias, misperception and misunderstanding, resulting in various levels of conflict, occur daily in almost every organization and culture. However, while we often think of conflict in the most negative context, if handled correctly (factoring in the complexity of the situation), positive outcomes can be generated. Conflict can occur in both a cooperative or competitive environment, and when not taking a physically destructive path, can lead to strengthening relationships and enhancing productivity.⁵¹

“Successful resolution of problems at all levels involves the understanding of others’ agendas, needs, motives and desires.”⁵² Reducing stereotyping and prejudice, as well as promoting coordination through the cognitive strategy⁵³ of perspective taking is one way to mitigate some of these issues that not only prevent cooperation and trust but also generate potentially enduring negative effects and outcomes. Further, research suggests that the more perspective taking occurs, to include in a competitive situation, the more likely the interaction will be assessed as cooperative.⁵⁴

While the attempt to suppress stereotypic thoughts is one strategy, the more constructive process of perspective taking, through the application of the self to the other, was found to both diminish the expression and accessibility of stereotypes.⁵⁵ Whereas suppression leads to both psychological and distancing

behaviors, perspective taking may lead to more – and positive - intergroup interaction.⁵⁶

Being aware of others' views and "considering these perspectives in actions and decision making is essential but must also be tempered by a mental toughness that helps maintain a positive personal outcome."⁵⁷ The intent in perspective taking is not compliance with all others, says Dr. Michael Sanders, but the development and implementation of effective win-win outcomes. After all, win-lose outcomes rarely ensure resolution in that "conflict resolved by subjugation tends to breed new conflict."⁵⁸

Relationship Building. In a 2010 research study⁵⁹, a group of senior military leaders, who had recently commanded at the O-6 level or higher, highlighted that interpersonal and cognitive skills, to include relationship building, communication, collaboration, cross-cultural competency and perspective-taking, were keys to successful leadership. Per FM 6-22, relationship building is defined as a technique, best used over time, in which leaders build positive rapport and a relationship of mutual trust by showing interest in and understanding a "follower's perspective". Leaders need to build and maintain relationships with many more groups in addition to their "followers".

Perspective taking can enable the formation of social bonds and, as such, may decrease stereotypes and prejudices by creating a sense of similarity. Conversely, interpersonal conflict and stereotyping may likely damage social bonds. Unless high self-esteem is present, applying self-traits to another will not result in a reduction of prejudice or stereotyping and thus not set the conditions

for social coordination and bonding.⁶⁰ This social bonding is important, and the process is reciprocal, as perspective-taking leads to potentially liking the other, thus motivating further perspective-taking⁶¹, leading to greater familiarity, which ultimately enables greater accuracy in anticipating and understanding the other.

In a study⁶² of over 550 Marine and Army service members who served as advisors in Iraq or Afghanistan, respondents gave the highest knowledge and skills rating to the ability to compare one's culture with the other's, to suppress one's cultural biases and not judge the counterpart's actions, and the skill to understand the perspective of the other.⁶³ Showing respect and building rapport were strongly related to the above-mentioned cultural skills and abilities; however, the study could not determine specific correlation (whether the relationship building allowed for more opportunity to engage in the cultural skills and abilities, or the cultural skills enabled the relationships). As trust and is built over time, the relationship building and cultural skills are likely mutually reinforcing.

Communication. Communication is fundamental to all human interaction and is comprised of language, both oral and written, and non-verbal behavior including gestures, expressions, style of dress and appearance. Miscommunication occurs in every day life, whether at the home or in the workplace, and even more so in cross-cultural environments because the sender of a message fails to take into consideration what the receiver knows or wants to know, or further, fails to appreciate what type of verbal and non-verbal expressions and behavior are acceptable in a particular culture.

To be successful in the JIIM environment, recent studies further endorsed that Army officers require interpersonal skills, knowledge of other government agencies' capabilities and culture, oral and written communication skills, and knowledge of other services capabilities and culture.⁶⁴ Further, brigade-and-above equivalent commanders emphasized the importance of communication, relationship building, and "people" skills.⁶⁵

When the deliverer either fails to consider the audience's level of knowledge or erroneously assumes the audience has the same level of knowledge as the speaker, the likelihood the intended messages will be understood and appreciated is greatly decreased. To clearly communicate, whether in writing, verbally or non-verbally, the sender has to attempt to take into account the receiver's perspective, move past her own biases and any approaches that attempt to change others into her own culture's image, and take into account the receiver's level of knowledge as well as his culture norms and practices.

Cross-Cultural Competency.

Reflective senior officers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan are telling us that wars are won by creating alliances, leveraging nonmilitary advantages, reading intentions, building trust, converting opinions, and managing perceptions – all these tasks demand an exceptional ability to understand people, their culture, and their motivation.⁶⁶

Since 2007 the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) has conducted several research projects to determine how to best train cross-cultural competency across the force. One of the resulting reports advises that while the Army has made steps in the right direction for

language and regional-specific culture training, general cross-cultural training is still lacking. And, that overall, there is a need for an overarching strategic framework as the majority of cultural training and education lacks vision.⁶⁷ While knowledge, skills and affect were found to be the three necessary components in the concept of cross-cultural competency, the latter two were assessed to be more directly related to successful outcomes. The authors cite the specific example of language proficiency; knowing a foreign language, while valuable to operating in specific regions, has limited transfer possibilities versus cognitive and interpersonal skills such as emotional regulation and perspective-taking that “are largely transferable among settings and culture-generic”⁶⁸, and enable adaptability.

Cultural understanding is helpful but in and of itself is not enough. Military personnel also need the ability to use situational cues to determine when and how culture is relevant, as well as other skills for interacting with individual members of the culture. For example, cultural knowledge may have limited utility if rigid interpersonal behavior or ethnocentric attitudes are not addressed.⁶⁹

Recognizing the need for enhancing specific skills based on this and other research and surveys, ARI developed a method for training and enhancing perspective taking through classroom and self-paced computer-based instruction. The training includes five modules of increasing difficulty with the goal of teaching students a perspective-taking methodology while also enhancing their ability and increasing their motivation to engage. As Soldiers advanced, they should become more aware of basic cognitive biases, be knowledgeable on the perspective-taking method, increase their propensity to engage, learn to regulate emotions, try harder and/or persist in perspective taking, improve their

ability to hypothesize and evaluate, and ultimately become more accurate in engaging in this cognitive aptitude.⁷⁰ The assessment of the research showed that there was a positive correlation between the curriculum and training and an increase in perspective-taking ability (specifically regarding generating, verifying and revising hypothesis and bias recognition).⁷¹

Since this training and assessment in 2010, the 162nd Infantry Brigade at Fort Polk, in the fall of 2011, implemented one of the case studies from ARI's proposed training; therefore evaluation data is not yet available as the advisors deployed this winter. The Marine Advisor Group at 29 Palms is also assessing as to how to implement the perspective-taking training.⁷²

RECOMMENDATIONS

More evaluation is needed to refine perspective-taking training and enhancement efforts, but empirical research over the past few decades has shown positive (and some negative) correlation to other adaptive interpersonal skills as a result of inferring how another thinks and feels within a given situation or environment. These adaptive interpersonal skills are required at all leader levels and in most situations, especially in a JIIM environment; as such, perspective taking should be trained and evaluated using proven methods as early as possible in leaders' careers, to include pre-commissioning. However, attempting to enhance this aptitude will likely require more than a few classes or occasional training:

The roots of this problem run much deeper, with deficiencies in perspective-taking resulting from a lifetime of cognitive and psychosocial shortfalls. Unfortunately, these same shortfalls to perspective taking are endemic in and exacerbated by the systemic thought processes inherent in the academic

disciplines valued in military organizations as well as the limited perspectives associated with being a part of military culture and military lifestyle.⁷³

In the past decade, many leaders have been exposed to various cultures throughout the JIIM environment, with the majority specifically focused on Afghanistan or Iraq. But being exposed does not automatically ensure a learning experience for future interaction across various cultures; while the concept of perspective taking may be obvious or natural to a limited few, for most, as outlined, perspective taking is neither easy, nor simple or ephemeral if effectively engaged.

Broadening assignments expose leaders to multiple perspectives, providing valuable experience and opportunity to hone interpersonal skills, but not all leaders can or will have the chance to serve in a capacity outside the institutional norms of a career pathway. As such, the military cannot rely on experiential learning alone -- often too little and too late -- to enhance the critical aptitude of perspective-taking. If the Army adopts a strategic framework for culture as a component of leader development as ARI has recommended, the training of already proven methodologies to enhance perspective-taking then could be integrated across the force as the importance and prioritization of developing adaptive leaders continues to grow.

Continued research, the application of current proposed training and methodologies and assessment is needed to more definitively determine how to best enhance perspective-taking and if this aptitude should more comprehensively and pro-actively be incorporated into leader and soldier education, training and development. However, the Army may benefit

significantly from implementing basic perspective taking training (that has already been proven effective) in at least three related areas immediately:

1) Provide perspective-taking training to leaders selected to attend broadening assignments. While the experience may hone the ability of the leader to take perspective, providing the training prior to the assignment will ensure to improve communication skills and increase the ability to better cooperate and reduce conflict.

2) Provide perspective-taking training to select groups, such as civil or public affairs personnel who should apply perspective-taking methodologies to most of their professional efforts, as a supplemental pilot study to the ongoing perspective-taking training being conducted for units tasked with advise and assist roles. Incorporate the methodologies as proposed by ARI studies into existing mandatory education for these select branches or career field designators.

3) Incorporate assessment of the willingness to take and consider other perspectives into the 360 and officer evaluation reports to assist in potentially identifying toxic leaders and also to socialize the importance of perspective taking into the Army culture.

CONCLUSION.

Today's environment for Army leaders mandates not only a collaborative approach replete with various cultures within the U.S., but also encompasses alliances and partnerships around the globe. Leaders will need to continue to strengthen their interpersonal skills toward clear communication and achieving

more effective cooperation, collaboration, conflict resolution and cultural competency. Intentionally and accurately taking the perspective, or multiple perspectives, of others for the purpose of identifying motives, desires and needs and anticipating conflict will strengthen relationships and improve communication, cooperation, and trust, and thus the chances of achieving mutually acceptable, more enduring solutions to complex problems and challenges in a JIIM context. While there are training programs and guidance available for those who desire to hone their interpersonal skills, those who need the training least typically prove to be the ones who will endeavor to seek continuous self-improvement. So-called toxic leaders and those lacking in interpersonal skills are more likely to be unaware of their lack of ability or poor leadership, or less concerned, and thus, potentially not willing to seek improvement or accept criticism.

Our leaders will be able to improve their perspective-taking skills through experience to include broadening assignments in organizations across the joint, interagency, intergovernmental and multi-national realm. However, the awareness of not only possessing this critical ability, but also training and enhancing for the purpose of understanding a perspective-taking methodology that can be applied across most cultures is imperative.

As in any complex environment, there is no one competency that can provide the answer to all challenges; perspective taking cannot guarantee conflict resolution, cooperation, team building, better communication, or improved cultural competency. Yet, the ability, propensity and accuracy in intuiting

another's thoughts and agenda in any situation, while simultaneously understanding and setting aside one's own biases, can have a desired effect on all interaction toward enduring solutions, whether against an enemy or in cooperation with colleagues, allies and security partners.

ENDNOTES

¹ Sharon K. Parker, Paul W.B. Atkins, and Carolyn M. Axtell. "Building Better Work Places Through Individual Perspective Taking: A Fresh Look at a Fundamental Human Process," 2008, <http://iwpp.dept.shef.ac.uk/espacePrive/sharonp/parker,atkins,axtell.pdf> (accessed November 22, 2011).

² In Army manuals, "empathy" is listed as a necessary leadership attribute and is defined as "the ability to understand and share feelings of another." Not to be confused with "sympathy", which is described as undertaking "feelings of pity and sorrow for someone else's misfortune". Oxford Dictionary, <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/empathy>. While there is not a clear academic consensus on the relationship between empathy and perspective taking, much research on the subject categorizes perspective taking as the cognitive component of empathy.

³ For an in depth review regarding the lack of and need for an understanding of language, perspectives and cultural skills – specifically regarding the Intelligence Community - see Major General Michael Flynn, "Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant In Afghanistan," January 2010, http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/AfghanIntel_Flynn_Jan2010_code507voices.pdf.

⁴ The depth and need for understanding varies depending on the specific mission.

⁵ Leon E. Panetta, speech, Halifax International Security Forum, Halifax, Nova Scotia, November 18, 2011, <http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1632> (accessed November 22, 2011).

⁶ Raymond T. Odierno, speech, Association of the United States Army Eisenhower Luncheon, Washington, D.C. October 11, 2011, http://www.army.mil/article/67090/Oct_11_2011_Chief_of_Staff_of_the_Army_2011_AUSA_Eisenhower_Luncheon_remarks/ (accessed October 18, 2011).

⁷ Raymond T. Odierno, *38th CSA Marching Orders* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, January, 2012).

⁸ Raymond T. Odierno, "Prevent, Shape, Win," December 12, 2011, <http://armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2011/12/prevent-shape-win/> (accessed December 14th, 2011).

⁹ Stanley McChrystal, "Design, Teamwork and Leadership", May 2012, <http://www.fastcompany.com/1836096/general-stanley-mcchrystal-innovation-uncensored-2012> (accessed May 12th, 2012).

¹⁰ For an in depth review regarding the lack of and need for an understanding of language, perspectives and cultural skills – specifically regarding the Intelligence Community - see Major General Michael Flynn, "Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant In Afghanistan," January 2010, http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/AfghanIntel_Flynn_Jan2010_code507voices.pdf.

¹¹ In certain situations or missions, such as direct combat, perspective-taking is not warranted, and counterproductive. Additionally, as perspective-taking can generate sympathy or empathy, leaders have to be cognizant of remaining decisive to prevent unnecessary risk to his mission and people.

¹² Many perspective-taking concepts and theories emerged from Jean Piaget's developmental models; for a discussion and comparison of theories and models of Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg and Robert Selman, see Joseph Anthony Rodriguez' dissertation, "The Adult Stages of Social Perspective-Taking: Assessment with the Doctor-Patient Problem," 1992, Graduate School of Education, Harvard University, <http://dareassociation.org/Papers/Rodriguez%20Dissertation.pdf> .

¹³ Dean Tjosvold, David W. Johnson, and Lawrence J. Fabrey, "Effects of Controversy and Defensiveness on Cognitive Perspective-Taking," *Psychological Reports* 47 (1980): 1043-1053.

¹⁴ Mark H. Davis et al., "Effect of Perspective Taking on the Cognitive Representation of Persons: A Merging of Self and Other," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 70, no. 4 (1996): 713.

¹⁵ While research has shown a direct link between perspective-taking and other desirable leadership skills and abilities, the four areas that will specifically be addressed in this paper are: conflict resolution, relationship building, communication, and cultural competency/understanding.

¹⁶ Maria Konnikova, "Lessons from Sherlock Holmes: The Importance of Perspective-Taking," October 18, 2011, <http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/guest-blog/2011/10/18/lessons-from-sherlock-holmes-the-importance-of-perspective-taking/> (accessed on December 8, 2011).

¹⁷ Parker, "Building Better Work Places," 4.

¹⁸ Ibid., 6.

¹⁹ Social perspective taking, perspective taking and cognitive empathy are sometimes used interchangeably in academic publications spanning cognitive, developmental, and social psychology.

²⁰ Hunter Gehlbach, "A New Perspective on Perspective Taking: A Multidimensional Approach to Conceptualizing an Aptitude," *Educational Psychology Review* 16, no. 3 (September 2004): 209-213.

²¹ Although no research was found specifically regarding the correlation between perspective taking and toxic leadership, the willingness and accuracy in taking another's perspective may serve to help mitigate toxic leadership.

²² Not to be confused with "sympathy", which is described as undertaking "feelings of pity and sorrow for someone else's misfortune". Oxford Dictionary, <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/empathy>.

²³ Walter G. Stephen and Krystina Finlay, "The Role of Empathy in Improving Intergroup Relations," *Journal of Social Issues*, (Winter 1999), http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0341/is_4_55/ai_62521565/?tag=content;col1 (accessed on November 22, 2011).

²⁴ Ibid. "Parallel empathy" described as having emotional responses to another person that are similar to the other's emotional experience (sympathize with the person); "reactive empathy" described as a reaction to the emotional experiences of the other person (react with emotional response to the situation or person affecting the other).

²⁵ U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Leadership*, Army Regulation 600-100 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, March 8, 2007), 3.

²⁶ James Youniss, *Parents and Peers in Social Development: A Sullivan-Piaget Perspective*, Phoenix ed. (University of Chicago Press, 1982), 9.

²⁷ Perrine Ruby and Jean Decety, "How Would You Feel Versus How Do You Think She Would Feel? A Neuroimaging Study of Perspective Taking with Social Emotions," *Journal of Cognitive Neural Science*, 16, no. 6, (2004), 988.

²⁸ Shali Wu and Boaz Keysar, "The Effect of Culture on Perspective Taking." *Psychological Science* 18, no. 7 (2007): 605.

²⁹ Ibid., 601.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ See Department of Defense Directive 3000.07, *Irregular Warfare*, for specifics on responsibilities of conduct of Irregular Warfare and development of capabilities.

³² Colonel (Ret.) David Maxwell, email message to author, January 2, 2012.

³³ For example, direct combat missions or "Finish" within the Find, Fix, Finish, Exploit, Analyze, Disseminate (F3EAD) SOF targeting process.

³⁴ Although the author did not find research specifically addressing the relationship between perspective-taking and toxic leadership, the willingness and accuracy in taking another's perspective may serve to help mitigate toxic leadership.

³⁵ Parker, "Building Better Work Places," 29.

³⁶ Nicholas Epley and Eugene Caruso, "Perspective Taking: Misstepping Into Others Shoes," June 5, 2008, <http://faculty.chicagobooth.edu/nicholas.epley/EpleyCarusoMisstepping.pdf>, (accessed November 21, 2011).

³⁷ Davis, "A Merging of Self and Others," 96.

³⁸ U.S. Department of the Army, *The Operations Process*, Field Manual No. 5-0 (Washington, CC: U.S. Department of the Army, March 26, 2010), 1-7 thru 1-9. For fundamentals of Design, which include applying critical thinking, understanding the operational environment, solving the right problem, adapting to dynamic conditions, and achieving the designated goal, see FM 5-0, Chapter 3.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Epley and Caruso, "Perspective Taking: Misstepping Into Others' Shoes", 299.

⁴¹ Ibid., 298.

⁴² Ibid., 304.

⁴³ Lee Ross, David Greene, and Pamela House, "The "False Consensus Effect": An Egocentric Bias in Social Perception and Attribution Processes," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 13, no. 3 (1977): 280.

⁴⁴ Ibid. The False Consensus Effect is when one sees his own behavior as common and appropriate while assessing differing behavior as uncommon or inappropriate.

⁴⁵ Gordon B. Moskowitz, *Social Cognition: Understanding Self and Others*, ed. Abraham Tesser, (New York: The Guilford Press, 2005), 277.

⁴⁶ Gehlbach, "A New Perspective," 226.

⁴⁷ Mark H. Davis, "Measuring Individual Differences in Empathy: Evidence for a Multidimensional Approach." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 44, no. 1 (1983): 115.

⁴⁸ Parker, "Building Better Work Places," 9.

⁴⁹ M. Wade Markel, et al., *Developing U.S. Army Officers' Capabilities for Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, and Multinational Environments* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Arroyo Center, 2011),

http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2011/RAND_MG990.sum.pdf, (accessed November 2011).

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Morton Deutsch, "Cooperation and Conflict: A Personal Perspective on the History of the Social Psychological Study of Conflict Resolution," in *The Essentials of Teamworking: International Perspectives*, ed. M. A. West, D. Tjosvold, and K. G. Smith (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2005), http://media.wiley.com/product_data/excerpt/89/04700154/0470015489.pdf, (accessed November 24, 2011).

⁵² Dr. Michael Sanders, email message to author, December 16, 2011.

⁵³ Adam D. Galinsky, Cynthia S. Wang and Gillian Ku, "Perspective-Takers Behave More Stereotypically," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 95, no. 2 (2008): 404.

⁵⁴ Deutsch, "Cooperation and Conflict".

⁵⁵ Adam D. Galinsky and Gordon B. Moskowitz, "Perspective-Taking: Decreasing Stereotype Expression, Stereotype Accessibility, and In-Group Favoritism," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 78, no. 4 (2000): 722.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 710.

⁵⁷ Sanders, email to author.

⁵⁸ Kathleen O'Connell-Corcoran and Brent Mallinckrodt, "Adult Attachment, Self-Efficacy, Perspective Taking and Conflict Resolution," *Journal of Counseling and Development* 78, no. 4 (Fall 2000): 473.

⁵⁹ Salmoni et al., "Growing Strategic Leaders for Future Conflict," *Parameters* (Spring 2010): 75.

⁶⁰ Adam D. Galinsky, Gillian Ku & Cynthia S. Wang, "Perspective-Taking and Self-Other Overlap: Fostering Social Bonds and Facilitating Coordination," *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 8, no. 2 (2005): 110, 111.

⁶¹ Parker, "Building Better Work Places," 35.

⁶² No empirical data is available as to the overarching impact or results of this effort.

⁶³ Kimberly Metcalf, et al., *The Human Dimension of Advising: An Analysis of Interpersonal, Linguistic, Cultural, and Advisory Aspects of the Advisor Role*, Technical Report 1248 (U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, June 2009).

⁶⁴ Markel et al., "Developing Army Officer Capabilities".

⁶⁵ Salmoni et al., "Growing Strategic Leaders".

⁶⁶ Robert H. Scales, "The Second Learning Revolution," *Military Review* (January-February 2006): 38. (Originally cited in Kimberly A. Metcalf, et al., "Social Perspective Taking, U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences.")

⁶⁷ Allison Abbe and Stanley M. Halpin, "The Cultural Imperative For Professional Military Education and Leader Development," *Parameters*. (Winter 2009).

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Metcalf et al., "Perspective-Taking: Description of a Curriculum and Summative Evaluation Findings with Army Soldiers," no date. Paper emailed to author, December 21, 2011.

⁷¹ Ibid., 4.

⁷² Dr. Kimberly Metcalf, email message to author, December 21, 2011.

⁷³ John C. O'Conner, *Perspective Taking and the Educated Operational Level Commander*, Strategy Research Paper (Newport, RI, U.S. Naval War College, October 23, 2009), 3.

